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Chapter 2

Creating an English Catholic Identity: Relics, Martyrs and English Women Religious in Counter-Reformation Europe

James E. Kelly

The discovery of the catacomb ‘martyrs’ and the contemporary martyrdoms of early modern Catholics created a renewed enthusiasm for martyrs and relics in Counter-Reformation Europe. Behaving as very much the model of Counter-Reformation professed life, English women religious on the continent joined their European counterparts in the homage paid to martyrdom and relics. Yet the situation of their co-religionists in England highlighted their own plight as Catholics, giving them a heightened profile in Europe. Equally, for all their similarities to other European convents, communities of English women religious revered the memory and relics of the martyrs with added fervour. Not only did relics represent an opportunity to preserve English Catholic identity but they were also used in a self-conscious effort to create one, ready for the time when Catholicism would return as the official religion of England. This chapter will briefly consider the wider context in which the English convents were operating, before exploring the ways in which they behaved similarly to other communities of women religious and finishing, in the final section, by looking at the distinct attitudes and behaviours developed by the convents as they strove to create an English Catholic identity.

I

During its twenty-fifth session on 3–4 December 1563, the delegates of the Council of Trent finally reached the disputed subject of relics. Taking aim at the reformers who claimed that there should be no veneration of the material reminders of the saints, the Council decreed that

such views ‘are to be utterly condemned, as the Church has long since condemned and now again condemns them.’ Instead, the Council Fathers pointed to the early church’s promotion of venerating the saints, maintaining that ‘the holy bodies of the holy martyrs and of others living with Christ ... are to be venerated by the faithful, through which many benefits are bestowed by God on man.’¹ As such, relics became a hallmark of the new Tridentine movement, a tool to counter Protestant heresy whilst simultaneously acting as a reminder of the relationship between the Catholic Church’s past and present.

The importance of relics was heightened by a contemporaneously burgeoning martyrdom cult, fuelled not only by current affairs but the 1578 discovery of the catacombs in Rome. This archaeological find underlined the Catholic Church’s continuity with the ancient, early Christian martyrs. Capturing the imagination, the existence of these relics bolstered Rome’s claims to religious Truth in the face of Protestant attack. Unsurprisingly, these discoveries added to an increasingly positive correlation: martyrdom, antiquity and Roman provenance all pointed towards the Counter-Reformation claims of the Catholic Church, underlining the obvious links between the martyrs of old and the anti-Catholic persecutions going on in Europe at that time, not to mention the more over-arching universal claims of the Church in Rome.² In this context it is little wonder that the English Catholic community

My thanks to Caroline Bowden and Alexandra Walsham for their comments on earlier versions of this essay.

¹ H.J. Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: English Translation* (Rockford, IL, 1978), 215. See also John W. O’Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (London, 2013), 243–4.

² Trevor Johnson, ‘Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 47 (1996): 279–80, 294; Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535–1603* (Aldershot, 2002), 170; Simon Ditchfield, ‘Martyrs on the Move: Relics as Indicators of Local Diversity in the Tridentine Church’, in Diane Wood (ed.), *Martyrs and Martyrologies*, Studies in Church History, 30 (Oxford, 1993), 283–94; Simon Ditchfield, ‘Tridentine Worship

should be feted by the Counter-Reformation Church whilst simultaneously experiencing a heightened sense of this martyrdom mentality and, by extension, relics boom. Both sides of the experience played into the other: as Gregory notes, ‘the renewal of Catholic martyrdom seems to have accentuated, not displaced, the veneration of the early martyr-saints, strengthening the sense of an ancient tradition reborn.’³ The persecuted seminary priest was the contemporary equivalent of the catacomb ‘martyr’. Relics thus became an important aspect of English Catholic material culture.

and the Cult of Saints’, in R. Po-Chia Hsia, (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, vol. 6: Reform and Expansion 1500–1660* (Cambridge, 2007), 207.

³ Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MASS, 1999), 306. For England being feted as the ‘new Rome’, see William Allen’s comments in *ibid.*, 298. A good example of this zeal for English Catholic martyrs is the Spanish holy-woman, Luisa de Carvajal, who made it her work to collect their remains: Glyn Redworth, *The She-Apostle: The Extraordinary Life and Death of Luisa de Carvajal* (Oxford, 2008), 210–13. The fame of some English martyrs spread quickly and widely; relics of Edmund Campion were sent to Rome; Mary, Queen of Scots and Robert Persons also possessed relics of the famed Jesuit: Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 299–300; Arthur F. Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Ant-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, IN, 2005), 16. For more on the geographic spread of Campion’s reputation and relics, as well as the importance of the martyrs for the survival of English institutions abroad, see T. M. McCoog, *‘And Touching Our Society’: Fashioning Jesuit Identity in Elizabethan England* (Toronto, 2013), 100–1, 114, 269–70. In 1676, the Bridgettines were informed that the life of ‘their’ martyr Richard Reynolds was being set down with images by a brother of the order in Antwerp: Ushaw College, LC/A19/18. As early as 1611, members of the secular clergy were showing relics of the English martyrs to Pope Paul V: Michael C. Questier (ed.), *Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead*, Camden Fifth Series, vol. 12 (Cambridge, 1998), 112. In this sense, England was a special case due to the well-publicized persecution taking place; exportation of relics from other areas generally waited until that locality had been ‘reclaimed’ for Catholicism: Howard Louthan, ‘Tongues, Toes, and Bones: Remembering Saints in Early Modern Bohemia’, *Past and Present*, Supplement 5 (2010): 177–9.

II

It was from this intense atmosphere that the members of the English convents were largely drawn. Between the opening of the first English convent in exile at the end of the sixteenth century and the French Revolution, over 3,900 women entered this particular expression of Catholic religious life. These women did not enter the enclosure and forget all that they had experienced before;⁴ some brought with them particular experiences of martyrdom and relics. For example, Susanna Touchet put her Dominican vocation, or at least her vow of chastity, down to having prayed before the relics of St Francis Xavier at the Jesuit church in Brussels.⁵ Following the execution of the seminary priest Edmund Gennings in London in 1591, Lucy Ridley acted the 'relic collector'; she reached out to touch the corpse only for the dead priest's finger to miraculously detach itself in her hand. Lucy smuggled the prized relic to Louvain, where she reportedly became a nun.⁶

⁴ See, for example, James E. Kelly, 'Essex Girls Abroad: Family Patronage and the Politicization of Convent Recruitment in the Sixteenth Century', in Caroline Bowden and James E. Kelly (eds), *The English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800: Communities, Culture and Identity* (Farnham, 2013), 33–51.

⁵ The Prioress and community of Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight (eds), 'Records of the Nuns of the Second Order', *Dominicana*, CRS, vol. 25 (London, 1925), 188.

⁶ Gregory notes that she became a Benedictine nun, though a later version of the life of Gennings had her becoming an Augustinian. Gregory ventures this means that by the latter edition, the author, Gennings' brother, had learnt that she became an Augustinian. This may be the case though an alternative explanation could be proffered: Ridley is not listed amongst the English Augustinian community at Louvain, nor as a member of the Flemish St Monica's convent from which it stemmed, despite Gennings' claim that she was still alive in 1600. Thus, the original claim that she became a Benedictine is more likely, the latter biography putting her in the Augustinian house because it was assumed she was part of an English community rather than a local one. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 298–9, 492; John Geninges, *The life and death of Mr. Edmund Geninges priest, crowned with martyrdom at London, the 10. day of Nouember, in the yeare M.D.XCI.* (St Omer, 1614), 94 (EEBO 11728).

Continental convents made something of a habit of relic hoarding. In the 1660s, the Franciscans at Munich managed to acquire the body of the early martyr St Dorothea from Italy, the first of several catacomb saints they subsequently collected, as did the city's Poor Clare community. The full bodies were 'decorated' and displayed in the public church.⁷ The Franciscan convent of Corpus Domini in Bologna held the relics of its founder, St Catherina Vigri (d. 1463), whilst the Rome-based Carmelite convent of Santa Maria of Regina Coeli boasted in its collection the index finger of St Teresa of Avila.⁸ In Madrid, at the convent of the Descalzas, Philip II's sister, Joanna of Portugal, founded the female equivalent of the Spanish monarch's relic collection at the royal monastery of Escorial; the Carmelite community tended to the relics collected by female Habsburgs.⁹ Helen Hills has explored how women religious used relics to extend their spiritual authority beyond the boundaries of their enclosure; for example, to underline the foundation's identity, the sisters at a Dominican convent in Rome took the names of the apostles to match the relics that the institution held.¹⁰

⁷ Ulrike Strasser, 'Bones of Contention: Cloistered Nuns, Decorated Relics, and the Contest Over Women's Place in the Public Sphere of Counter-Reformation Munich', *Archive for Reformation History*, 90 (1999): 283–4.

⁸ Silvia Evangelisti, *Nuns: A History of Convent Life* (Oxford, 2008), 147, 152.

⁹ Guy Lazure, 'Possessing the Sacred: Monarchy and Identity in Philip II's Relic Collection at the Escorial', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 60 (2007): 64, n. 16.

¹⁰ Helen Hills, 'Nuns and Relics: Spiritual Authority in Post-Tridentine Naples', in Cordula Van Wyle (ed.), *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View* (Aldershot, 2008), 21–4. There is a tendency to give very gendered readings of the relationship between relics and female religious which portrays disagreements about who held relics as being motivated by this gender 'battle'. Yet Johnson explores a similar dispute to that outlined by Strasser, but this time between male clergy in the late 1660s, thus suggesting that such disputes were not just about gender but were a far wider phenomenon concerning spiritual authority. See Strasser, 'Bones of Contention'; Hills, 'Nuns and Relics', 20; Lazure, 'Possessing the Sacred': 78–9; Johnson, 'Holy Fabrications': 291–3.

Martyrdom was esteemed by those who, like women religious, had little chance of ever experiencing it. Gregory suggests that ‘Catholic martyr images encapsulated Counter-Reformation virtues, such as obedience and self-denial,’¹¹ two of the characteristics which were enshrined in the vows of obedience and poverty made by the nuns. The structure of convent life furthered the appeal of martyrs. The lives of nuns were guided by the texts they read and martyrologies were key to shaping individual consciences and defining national or confessional identities. The Roman Martyrologue was read in the Divine Office at Prime on the day preceding the feast of the saint to be honoured and it was certainly in use at the English Bridgettine and Aire Poor Clare communities.¹² At the Ghent Benedictines, Mary Southcote sang the Martyrologue on Christmas Eve with such emotion ‘that it mov’d even to Tears of Devotion’.¹³ Mary Ward always carried with her a copy of the Roman Martyrology, from which she read daily.¹⁴ Like other continental convents, the Rouen Poor Clares apparently created their own martyrologies; these often included members of the community and those with particular connections to the order.¹⁵

In this atmosphere the collecting of and caring for relics was an important job. In the eyes of the English Jesuit, John Gerard, England’s very investment in the community of

¹¹ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 279, 297–8, 303.

¹² Laurence Lux-Sterritt (ed.), ‘Spirituality’, *English Convents in Exile*, vol. 2, 313–14, 319.

¹³ Lady Abbess and Community, ‘Obituary Notices of the Nuns of the English Benedictine Abbey of Ghent in Flanders 1627–1811’, *Miscellanea XI*, CRS, vol. 19 (London, 1917), 29. At the Bruges Augustinian community, they had the Martyrologue read at supper: English Convent, Bruges, MS CX, ‘Annals, Vol. 2: 1729–93’, p. 334.

¹⁴ Mary C. E. Chambers, *The Life of Mary Ward (1585–1645)*, ed. Henry J. Coleridge (London, 1882), 491.

¹⁵ Caroline Bowden (ed.), ‘History Writing’, *English Convents in Exile*, vol. 1, 34.

saints was at stake.¹⁶ Prevalent in the English context more generally, the high value placed upon relics was also evident in the convents. For example, the Paris Benedictines went to dangerous lengths to secure their relic collection during the French Revolution, doing all in their means to distract the authorities' search, thus allowing the nuns to carry the relics back to England with them.¹⁷ In the first half of the seventeenth century, Elizabeth Worsley, an Antwerp Carmelite, developed such a severe form of discipline that she was only allowed to perform it on the feasts of martyrs.¹⁸ When the new church was consecrated at the Bruges Augustinian house in 1739 great emphasis was put on the required placing of the relics in the new altar, whilst at the Louvain Augustinians they annually celebrated the feast of the Theban legion martyrs whose relics were placed in their church altar in 1624.¹⁹

It is little wonder, therefore, that English women religious tapped into a spiritual current seemingly widespread in other Tridentine convents: the idea of the nun as martyr. It has already been noted that the very characteristics of Counter-Reformation martyrdom bore a striking resemblance to life within a community of women religious. As such, martyrdom, more than just being admired, could actively be desired by those with little chance of ever achieving it. For example, Teresa of Avila expressed such sentiments when writing to

¹⁶ Anne M. Myers, 'Father John Gerard's Object Lessons: Relics and Devotional Objects in *Autobiography of a Hunted Priest*', in Ronald Corthell, Frances E. Dolan, Christopher Highley and Arthur F. Marotti (eds), *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, IND, 2007), 220.

¹⁷ Bede Camm, *Forgotten Shrines: An Account of Some Old Catholic Halls and Families in England and of Relics and Memorials of the English Martyrs* (London, 1910), 365.

¹⁸ Katrien Daemen-de Gelder (ed.), 'Life Writing II', *English Convents in Exile*, vol. 4, 84–5.

¹⁹ Bruges Annals, 2, pp. 61–3; Douai Abbey, Archives of St Monica's, Louvain and St Augustine's, Newton Abbot, C2, pp. 264–5. The Rouen Poor Clares took the connection with new buildings further, placing relics in the foundations of a new chapel wall in 1719 and the four corners of the new cloister in 1724: Bowden, 'History Writing', 231, 238.

cloistered Carmelite communities.²⁰ Such sentiments meant that the mystical death of martyrdom with Christ was available to women religious, though it became more metaphorical and almost a reward for leading a particularly pious life, accepting of suffering.²¹ Hills has found numerous examples of nuns' writings in Rome and Naples that portray the religious life as a martyrdom²² and English women religious were certainly not strangers to this Tridentine-shaped view. Abbess Mary Knatchbull, writing of the foundation of what would become the Pontoise Benedictine community, noted that, 'The good Religious received their obedience most courageously, offering them selves as to a kind of Martiredome for the love of God, and I hope it will prove no less in the way of meritt and purchess of eternall glory for them.'²³ Writing of Ursula Wakeman's final illness at the end of 1649, the author of the Antwerp Carmelite 'Short Collections' commented, 'what I have read of Martyrs may be as truely said of her, they smiled and praised God in the midst of flames and being so transported with what they saw above, never minded what they Sufferd below, and so she in the heat of a firy and malignant fever cheerfully praised God with out the least regard to her disease'.²⁴ Mary Ward recorded that she actively desired to be a martyr²⁵ whilst

²⁰ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 279–80.

²¹ Ulrike Strasser, 'Clare Hortulana of Embach or How to Suffer Martyrdom in the Cloister', in Van Wyle, *Female Monasticism*, 50–1. This evocation had a precedent in pre-Reformation Christian spirituality, where 'contemplative martyrdom' was frequently evoked, including by the laity: Dana Piroyansky, "'Thus may a man be a martyr': The Notion, Language and Experiences of Martyrdom in late Medieval England", in Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer (eds), *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England, c.1400–1700* (Woodbridge, 2007), 70–87. My thanks to Susan Royal for this reference.

²² Hills, 'Nuns and Relics', 34.

²³ James E. Kelly (ed.), 'Convent Management', *English Convents in Exile*, vol. 5, 248. See also CRS 19, 18, 50, 70.

²⁴ Daemen-de Gelder, 'Life Writing II', 226; see also 86, 89, 90, 134–5, 145, 365.

at the Rouen Poor Clares Abbess Mary Giffard's last years at the end of the seventeenth century were plagued with illness 'in which she suffer'd like a Martyr, by sharp pains, & even continual dolours, that I cannot but confide thro' the mercy of God, that if she is not already in the company of the blessed, she will be soon with them'.²⁶ This is only a small selection of the numerous examples to be found in English convents and it is not within the scope of this essay to fully explore this form of spiritual writing; nevertheless, John Gerard's encouragement to readers to draw comfort from identifying with the martyrs²⁷ gives a particularly English tint to what appears to have been a widespread Counter-Reformation literary trope.

As in European convents more generally, a recognized characteristic of relics was that their application could help to alleviate the effects of illness or offer comfort at the time of dying. These wonders worked through material objects showed the Church of Rome to be the 'designated channel of supernatural power'²⁸ but on a more basic level they offered solace. For example, in Augsburg, Jesuits touched expectant mothers with a segment of St Ignatius of Loyola's cloak to lessen the chance of a difficult child birth.²⁹ English Catholics were well

²⁵ Christina Kenworthy-Browne (ed.), *Mary Ward (1584–1645): A Brief Relation ... with Autobiographical Fragments and a Selection of Letters*, CRS, vol. 81 (Woodbridge, 2008), 124.

²⁶ Bowden, 'History Writing', 188; see also 69, 138–9, 142, 224.

²⁷ Myers, 'Gerard's Object Lessons', 232. For more on the spirituality of the English convents, see Laurence Lux-Sterritt, 'Divine Love and the Negotiation of Emotions in Early Modern English Convents', in Bowden and Kelly, *English Convents*, 229–45.

²⁸ Alexandra Walsham, 'Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England', *The Historical Journal*, 46 (2003): 794. Walsham suggests that this was a deliberate missionary ploy targeted at a perceived Protestant weakness as it 'advertised Catholicism's superior thaumaturgic capacities and zealously propagated the idea of sacralised landscape': *ibid.*, 780.

²⁹ Johnson, 'Holy Fabrications': 286, 294–6.

aware of the potentially thaumaturgic qualities of the Jesuit founder's 'artefacts' through imported books and English Jesuits' use of holy water which had been in contact with such relics.³⁰ Indeed, it was recorded that when Mary Ward was forced to receive the last rites in 1614 in St Omer, a reliquary containing a fragment of St Ignatius' winter cassock was placed on her neck and she quickly recovered, being able to walk round the house only a few days later.³¹

Equally, the 'targeted' nature of relic assistance was common to Counter-Reformation women religious, the English convents behaving no differently to their continental cousins. In 1688 the prioress of the Antwerp Carmelites sent to Mary of Modena a relic of St Teresa of Avila, 'a peece of her flesh I presume to present, beseeching your maiesty to weare it in your labour'.³² In December 1669 Abbess Mary Caryll of the Dunkirk Benedictines stopped over at the Bruges Augustinian house after visiting a famed surgeon about her breast cancer. During her stay she was cured, the sisters attributing it to the powerful intercession of St Francis Xavier, whose relic was kept in her chamber.³³ In the late eighteenth century, the Paris Benedictine Mary Glynn was also suffering from breast cancer. During the operation to cut it out she declined the offer of being forcibly held down and instead sat upright in her

³⁰ Walsham, 'Miracles': 789, 797.

³¹ Chambers, *Life of Mary Ward*, 307. Another sister of the Institute, Joyce Vaux, was afflicted by a kind of madness and painful swelling of the body in April 1614, until she was healed following the application of the relic: *idem*. Paula Hubbard, a white nun at the Paris Augustinians, also suffered a bout of apparent madness during her final illness around August 1650 until the abbess soothed her with the application of a relic: Douai Abbey, C2, pp. 516–17.

³² British Library, Add MS 28225, pp. 276–7.

³³ English Convent, Bruges, MS CA, 'Annals, Vol. 1: 1629–1729', p. 111.

chair, a crucifix in one hand and a bag of relics in the other.³⁴ At the Brussels Benedictines, a relic of the True Cross was placed in the hands on the breast of all dying religious.³⁵ With such faith in the intercessory power of relics, it is little surprise that when Edmund Bedingfield performed an exorcism on two possessed nuns at the Lierre Carmelites it was widely believed the devils were hiding their relics and attacking the nuns' attachment to them.³⁶

The possession of such potentially powerful items meant the English nuns had to house them accordingly. Showing their devotion to relics, Elizabeth and Lucy Conyers of the Paris Benedictines made many reliquaries for the Lady Chapel.³⁷ The Lierre Carmelites received tortoise shell reliquaries from benefactors, as well as two made from silver.³⁸ In his scurrilous written attack on the English Bridgettines at Lisbon, Thomas Robinson commented, 'For the siluer that inshrineth their Reliques ... I know not how to value it; but it is without doubt both plentifull and massie, for there bee few of their rotten Reliques but are

³⁴ Joseph S. Hansom (ed.), 'The English Benedictines of the convent of our Blessed Lady of Good Hope in Paris, now St. Benedict's Priory, Colwich, Staffordshire', *Miscellanea VII*, CRS, vol. 9 (London, 1911), 405.

³⁵ Anon, *Chronicle of the First Monastery Founded at Brussels for English Benedictine Nuns AD 1597* (Bergholt, 1898), 159.

³⁶ Nicky Hallett, *Witchcraft, Exorcism and the Politics of Possession a Seventeenth-Century Convent: 'How Sister Ursula was once Bewitched & Sister Margaret Twice'* (Aldershot, 2007), 62, 94.

³⁷ CRS 9, 381.

³⁸ Kelly, 'Convent Management', 144, 158. The Brussels Benedictines received two silver reliquaries from a Jesuit named Thompson: Anon, *Chronicle of the First Monastery*, 102.

set in silver.³⁹ Likewise, the Bruges Augustinians recognized the worth of reliquaries, giving them as gifts at significant moments.⁴⁰

These 'relic-holders' took on added importance through the belief that a relic's thaumaturgic powers could be transferred to the cases in which they were held. Such containers thus became secondary relics⁴¹ and could possess their own supernatural qualities, such as when Mary Ward was given a fine crystal reliquary. On one occasion when she was detained by the authorities, they marvelled at the reliquary rather than prosecute her for possessing it, which itself was viewed as miraculous.⁴² As Ann Jerningham lay dying at the Bruges Augustinian house in 1741 she expressed concern that the relic of St Peter's chains held in the choir was not better presented; money of hers was afterwards used to pay for its improvement and the chronicle writer expressed the belief that St Peter subsequently interceded powerfully on Jerningham's behalf.⁴³

Being enclosed, the English convents were reliant on an extended network of supporters to procure relics for them. To show his esteem for the Antwerp Carmelites, in

³⁹ Carmen M. Mangion, 'The Convents and the Outside World', *English Convents in Exile*, vol. 6, 13. The nun author of the convent annals mentioned reliquaries made of silver: Exeter University Library, MS 262/Add. 1/B/158, pp. 181–2.

⁴⁰ Bruges Annals, 2, pp. 43, 318. The Paris Augustinians received a financial gift when they sent a crown of flowers that had been laid on the relics of St Justin to a local benefactor: Westminster Diocesan Archives, Paris Diurnal, 26 April 1698.

⁴¹ This was the case on the English mission where, for example, the Jesuit William Weston claimed that a linen casket from Glastonbury Abbey that once housed a nail from the crucifixion healed a boy in 1586: Walsham, 'Miracles', 795.

⁴² Kenworthy-Browne, *Mary Ward*, 22. Similarly, despite constant searches during her absence from the convent, Dorothy Errington's collection of relics was miraculously never discovered: Bruges Annals, 2, p. 69.

⁴³ Bruges Annals, 2, p. 79.

1642 Toby Matthew gave them a relic of the heart of the order's foundress, St Teresa of Avila.⁴⁴ In 1671 the Pontoise Benedictines received the arm of St Adrian from the Abbot Montague, who had acquired it from Henrietta Maria's belongings after her death. The community received permission to expose it on his feast day. Yet, more often, the relics were sent out from Rome, underlining the English convents' connection with the 'mother Church'. Thus, the Pontoise Benedictines received the relics of several catacomb martyrs at the initiative of the unenclosed Mary Ward follower, Mary Poyntz.⁴⁵ The Rouen Poor Clares were reliant on another Mary Ward sister: Catherine Dawson had procured for them the body of the catacomb martyr St Hyacinth in 1668. They also received a piece of St Francis of Assisi's cloak in 1723 from the procurator of the English College in Rome, Richard Howard. The sisters placed the piece of fabric in a crystal reliquary hung from the neck of the saint's statue and it became the subject of an annual procession on the octave of the saint's feast.⁴⁶ In 1740, Prioress Lucy Herbert's sister sent several relics from Rome to the Bruges Augustinians, including those of the True Cross, St Peter and St Francis Xavier.⁴⁷ In the eighteenth century the Jesuit John Thorpe sent to his cousins, Catherine and Mary Thorpe at the Lierre Carmelites, 31 relics in total, including those of St Ignatius of Loyola and the early Christian martyr, St Sebastian, not to mention several rings that had touched the arm relic of

⁴⁴ Ann Hardman, *English Carmelites in Penal times* (London, 1936), 76–7. A grand reliquary was subsequently made by a renowned local goldsmith: J.P. Vander Motten and Katrien Daemen-de Gelder, 'A Cloistered Entrepôt: Sir Tobie Matthew and the English Carmel in Antwerp', *English Studies*, 92 (2011): 555 n. 39.

⁴⁵ In 1668, they received a similar box of relics from Rome: Abbess of Teignmouth, 'Registers of the English Benedictine Nuns of Pontoise OSB', *Miscellanea X*, CRS, vol. 17 (London, 1915), 264–5.

⁴⁶ Bowden, 'History Writing', 87–8, 236.

⁴⁷ Bruges Annals, 2, p. 73. The Paris Augustinians also received relics from Rome: WDA, Paris Diurnal, 20 November 1707.

St Francis Xavier. He asked that any duplicate relics be kept for him to disperse as necessary whilst he sought new ones for them in Rome.⁴⁸

Like Counter-Reformation women religious more generally, English nuns used relics as a means to navigate the strict enclosure rules re-enforced by the Council of Trent. The possession of relics not only heightened the spiritual presence of convents in their locality but also gave them a greater ‘physical’ prominence than the ‘invisible’ nuns could perhaps otherwise attain. Processions both within and without the convent thus became a means of creating conventual spiritual primacy in a given town.⁴⁹ The English convents behaved similarly to their local counterparts, particularly at the Paris Augustinian house. Annually the sisters would arrange the procession of the relics of the catacomb martyr, St Justin Martyr, which had been given to the convent in 1694 by Mary of Modena. The moving of the relics to the public space was an assault on the senses, involving several priests carrying lighted tapers, the chaplain, draped in a cope, incensing the relics, he and the nuns singing responsive prayers.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Kelly, ‘Convent Management’, 164; Carmelite Convent, Darlington, now at Farnborough Abbey, uncatalogued letters of John Thorpe, SJ, 10 February 1769, 5 October 1769. The other relics were of Ss Francis de Sales, Benedict, John Gualbert, Joseph Calasanz and Jane Frances Fremiot de Chantal. The Rouen Poor Clares had a relic of St Charles Borromeo brought from the English College at Douai and a relic of the habit of St Collette of Corbie acquired from the Poor Clares at Ghent by Margaret Vavasour: Bowden, ‘History Writing’, 270.

⁴⁹ See Strasser, ‘Bones of Contention’: 275–9, 286; Hills, ‘Nuns and Relics’, 21–32; Evangelisti, *Nuns*, 122.

⁵⁰ WDA, Paris Diurnal, 11 Oct 1695; 22–30 Oct 1695; 20–28 Oct 1696; 13–28 April 1697; 11–20 April 1698; 8–16 May 1699; 1–9 May 1700; 8–15 May 1707. See also F. M. Th. Cedoz, *Un Couvent de Religieuses Anglaises à Paris de 1634 à 1884* (Paris, 1891), chap. 5. The sisters also exposed the relics of St Maurice on a little altar specially erected in the church on his feast day: WDA, Paris Diurnal, 21 September 1695.

Similarly, the Brussels Benedictines had been given the relics of St Blaise by an unnamed local princess in November 1673; they were ‘brought by the Reverend Dean and Chapter of St Gudule’s in solemn procession, and a great concours of people and placed in our church; and celebrated with a devout octave.’ The Archbishop of Mechelen, Alphonsus de Berghes, granted a 40-day indulgence to those who visited the Benedictines’ church on the octave of the saint’s feast, further raising the public profile of the English foundation.⁵¹ In November 1737 the Bishop of Antwerp granted a 40-day indulgence to all those who venerated the relics of St John of the Cross held by the Hoogstraten Carmelites during the octave of his feast. The community had already been granted leave to expose the relic on 28 April and the community kissed it each year on the saint’s November feast.⁵² In 1668, the Rouen Poor Clares received the body of the catacomb martyr St Hyacinth into their church with great fanfare; an indulgence was offered to those who venerated the martyr’s relics in the year of their arrival.⁵³ Such processions and public exposure gave the English convents a prominent place in local minds, not only opening up potential routes of patronage for them but once again evoking the plight of English Catholics in the European Counter-Reformation mind.

III

Yet it is within this practice of processions that a difference in emphasis starts to emerge. Since the fourth century the public display of relics in processions and the like had been used to strengthen local identity. Following the discovery of the catacomb relics, the phenomenon

⁵¹ Anon, *Chronicle of the First Monastery*, 103–5.

⁵² The relic was a gift from Mary Howard, prioress at the Antwerp Carmelites, who also donated the reliquary in which it was housed: Carmelite Monastery, Baltimore, CC67, first volume of annals, pp. 38–9.

⁵³ Bowden, ‘History Writing’, 34, 87–8.

was particularly pronounced in Rome, stress placed on the Catholic Church's material links to the early church. In the case of the English convents it is helpful to split these issues of identity and continuity. Taking continuity first, English women religious found themselves faced with an extra problem not shared by their Tridentine counterparts. Yes, they were concerned with highlighting the continuity of the Catholic Church in the face of Protestant critiques, but in addition to this they also sought to maintain the continuity of English Catholicism. In some ways, this was nothing new in the Counter-Reformation experience: across Europe, conscientious Catholics acted to save relics from Protestant desecration, such as in the Dutch Republic.⁵⁴ As the feted persecuted Catholics of the Counter-Reformation, English Catholics were not to be found lacking and they sought safe havens abroad for threatened relics. Naturally, they looked towards the stable communities of women religious on the continent. In turn it became a role of the English convents to keep alive the memory of old Catholic England, acting like the Counter-Reformation in microcosm.

Thus, the Dunkirk Benedictines held a reliquary crucifix believed to have once been the pectoral cross of an abbot of Fountains Abbey. It had been dug up there and was thought

⁵⁴ Judith Pollmann, 'Burying the Dead; Reliving the Past: Ritual, Resentment and Sacred Space in the Dutch Republic', in Benjamin J. Kaplan, Bob Moore, Henk van Nierop and Judith Pollmann (eds), *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands c.1570–1720* (Manchester, 2009), 90; see also Jeffrey Chipps Smith, 'Salvaging Saints: The Rescue and Display of Relics in Munich During the Early Catholic Reformation', in Virginia Chieffo Raguin (ed.), *Art, Piety and Destruction in the Christian West, 1500–1700* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 23–43; Lazure, 'Possessing the Sacred', 74–6; Johnson, 'Holy Fabrications', 275–6; Ditchfield, 'Tridentine Worship', 218; Louthan, 'Tongues, Toes, and Bones', 174–5, 180. Similar happened in Japan: Rady Roldan-Figueroa, 'Father Luis Piñero, SJ, the Tridentine Economy of Relics, and the Defense of the Jesuit Missionary Enterprise in Tokugawa Japan,' *Archive for Reformation History*, 101 (2010): 209–32. Some relics became absorbed into Protestant antiquarian collections. In the 1630s Henrietta Maria desired a relic of the True Cross be moved from an exhibition: Alexandra Walsham, 'Skeletons in the Cupboard: Relics after the English Reformation', *Past and Present*, Supplement 5 (2010): 139–42.

to have been brought to the convent by Abbess Mary Messenger, whose family had once owned the property.⁵⁵ The Brussels Benedictines possessed a relic of the True Cross retrieved from Elizabeth I's treasury by Mary Vavasour's great-uncle. It had been used initially at the family's Hazlewood home before its arrival at the convent, where it was displayed for public veneration.⁵⁶ The Bridgettines were allegedly in possession of the 'blood of Hailes', a phial of the Holy Blood that had once been held at the Cistercian Abbey of Hailes in Gloucestershire.⁵⁷ The Ghent Benedictines remembered the martyred St Elphege of Canterbury,⁵⁸ whilst the Pontoise Benedictines had special permission to celebrate the feasts of St Edward the Confessor and St Alban, the protomartyr of England.⁵⁹ The three English Carmelite houses assiduously kept the feast day of the martyred Thomas Becket as patron saint of England, whilst the Bridgettines allegedly venerated Becket's two arms, the polemical Robinson wryly commenting that they did so because 'as doubtlesse he was in his life, a very obstinate Prelate to his Prince.'⁶⁰ The Bridgettines had started their time in exile

⁵⁵ Camm, *Forgotten Shrines*, 380. The Rouen Poor Clares received in 1737 a similar 'gift' from the ruins of an old Catholic abbey, which they turned into a reliquary in 1741 and set on the altar containing relics of the apostles and St Francis of Assisi: Bowden, 'History Writing', 256.

⁵⁶ Anon, *Chronicle of the First Monastery*, 157–60.

⁵⁷ Mangion, 'Convents and the Outside World', 13. The community was sent a relic of the True Cross 'rescued' from Charles II's wardrobe: EUL, MS 262/Add. 1/B/158, p. 182. The blood of Hailes drew the ire of Henrician reformers though if it was destroyed, it was done so quietly: see Peter Marshall, 'The Rood of Boxley, the Blood of Hailes and the Defence of the Henrician Church', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 46 (1995): 689–96, especially n. 18.

⁵⁸ CRS 19, 58.

⁵⁹ CRS 17, 264.

⁶⁰ Daemen-de Gelder, 'Life Writing II', xiv; Mangion, 'Convents and the Outside World', 13. Robinson claimed that all relics of Becket had been burnt 'when popery was suppressed'. In fact, the convent only claimed to possess one of Becket's arms: EUL, MS 262/Add. 1/B/158, p. 181.

by adopting Becket as a figurehead who, like them, had once resisted a heretical monarch.⁶¹ Indeed, the community, as the only surviving foundation of women religious from pre-Reformation times, self-consciously took on the aspect of relics themselves and were described as such by Robert Persons, SJ.⁶² This aura was intensified by their possession of a pillar that formerly supported a cross which was believed to have stood before the old gateway of the original Syon Abbey. The arm of Richard Reynolds, a Bridgettine brother executed by Henry VIII, was thought to have hung from the very pillar as a warning to other Catholics.⁶³ In his polemic against the Bridgettines, Robinson commented that they brought a number of relics with them into exile. He claimed that Catholics viewed their very survival as a miracle and commented that the sisters painted Reynolds' 'picture and manner of execution vpon their Church walls', esteeming him a great martyr like those of more recent times.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Katy Gibbons, 'Saints in Exile: The Cult of Saint Thomas of Canterbury and Elizabethan Catholics in France', *Recusant History*, 29 (2009): 332–3.

⁶² EUL, MS 262/Add. 1/B/158, p. 3; Adam Hamilton, *Angel of Syon: The Life and Martyrdom of Blessed Richard Reynolds, Bridgettine Monk of Syon, Martyred at Tyburn, May 4, 1535* (London, 1905), 112. The Bridgettines were a special case: Hills goes too far when she describes Counter-Reformation convents generally as reliquaries with the nuns as living relics, glimpsed through the grille: Hills, 'Nuns and Relics', 33–4. Of course, nuns could be hailed as saints and intercession sought through their relics, as was the case with the Carmelites Elizabeth Worsley and Margaret Mostyn, or Justina Gascoigne at the Paris Benedictines. A relic of the Antwerp Carmelite Mary Margaret Wake was even said to have 'performed' a miracle: Daemen-de Gelder, 'Life Writing II', 90; Hallett, *Witchcraft*, 143; CRS 9, 362; Nicky Hallett, *Lives of Spirit: English Carmelite Self-Writing of the Early Modern Period* (Aldershot, 2007), 59, 169.

⁶³ Hamilton, *Angel of Syon*, 85–7, 102, 112.

⁶⁴ Mangion, 'Convents and the Outside World', 9. The relics the community brought with them included one of the True Cross given to them by Mary I: EUL, MS 262/Add. 1/B/158, pp. 180–1.

The example of the Bridgettines raises the issue of identity. Anne Dillon asserts that ‘the English Catholic community, in constructing the martyr, constructed itself’,⁶⁵ as the martyr experience helped create bonds and bolster identity. Such a reading can be extended to the English convents in exile, where a committed community life centred around national experience was necessary for their survival. On one level, links with and celebration of the contemporary English martyrs did just that. Geographically isolated from their domestic friends and neighbours, the convent communities were able to develop tight-knit groups through a shared perception of persecution of themselves and all those ‘back home’.⁶⁶

Most obvious were the family relationships a significant number of English women religious had with those who had been executed for their Catholic faith. A few examples of these includes the Ghent Benedictine, Isabella Corby, mother of the Jesuit martyr Ralph Corby; the Louvain Augustinian Margaret Clement, whose mother was educated in the household of Thomas More; the four daughters, one Dominican and three Augustinians, of William, viscount Stafford, beheaded in 1680; at the Louvain Augustinians, Ann, daughter to Margaret Clitherow, Susan Leyburne, whose father had been martyred in Lancaster in 1582, and Margaret Garnet, sister to the martyred Jesuit provincial, Henry Garnet.⁶⁷ Helen, Anne

⁶⁵ Dillon, *Construction of Martyrdom*, 369.

⁶⁶ See Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Basingstoke, 2003), 175: ‘the identity of individuals and cloisters was bound closely with their degree of proximity to the English martyrs and others who had sacrificed much for the preservation of their faith.’ To some extent, in England, the English martyrs filled a void in the material culture of Catholics following the destruction of many older relics: Walsham, ‘Miracles’: 794

⁶⁷ CRS 19, 54; Douai Abbey, C2, pp. 4–5, 21–2, 89, 136, 187, 193, 348; ‘Who Were the Nuns?’ database, BD041, LA241, PA083, PA084.

and Catherine Thwing, followers of Mary Ward, were even at the community's York house when their priest brother, Thomas, was executed in the same city in 1678.⁶⁸

It was through such familial links that the convents sometimes came into possession of the relics that helped bind their communities around a shared history of persecution. Elizabeth, Grace and Marie Ingleby were nieces to the martyred priest Francis Ingleby. They were professed at the English Franciscan convent in 1624, bringing with them the martyr's right hand.⁶⁹ It is thought that the lay sister, Agnes Morgan, brought with her to the Pontoise Benedictines in the mid-eighteenth century and then to the Dunkirk Benedictines the heart of her priest ancestor, Edward Morgan, martyred a century before.⁷⁰ Elizabeth More, eighteenth-century prioress of the Bruges Augustinians, donated a vertebra of the neck of her martyred ancestor Thomas More,⁷¹ whilst More's hair shirt was venerated by the Louvain Augustinians, who possessed it due to the presence of the above mentioned Margaret Clement.⁷² To the Bruges Augustinians in 1741 Catherine Willis brought a finger of the martyred priest Thomas Ford (1582), as well as a portrait, her family being connected to that

⁶⁸ WWTN, MW152, MW153, MW154.

⁶⁹ Camm, *Forgotten Shrines*, 137–8. Their entries at the convent were recorded by the then confessor and future martyr, Francis Bell. He also clothed and professed the Conceptionist Margaret Floyd: J. Gillow and R. Trappes-Lomax (eds.), *The Diary of the 'Blue Nuns'*, CRS, vol. 8 (London, 1910), 253.

⁷⁰ Camm, *Forgotten Shrines*, 363.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 349–50, 371. She had also possessed his rosary ring at some point.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 364, 372. For the importance of Thomas More as martyr for English and European Catholics in the Counter-Reformation, see Michael Questier, 'Catholicism, Kinship and the Public Memory of Sir Thomas More', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 53 (2002): 476–509; William Sheils, 'Polemic as Piety: Thomas Stapleton's *Tres Thomas* and Catholic Controversy in the 1580s', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 60 (2009): 74–94.

of the martyr.⁷³ Mary Poyntz, a companion of Mary Ward, rescued the quarters of the executed Benedictine John Lockwood and Edmund Catherick, smuggling them to the order's house in Augsburg, where they were placed under an altar in the infirmary.⁷⁴ The Bridgettines, according to Robinson, kept a bit of old Tyburn given to them by a Jesuit 'because it had been honored by so many of their brethren, which is had in little lesse esteeme than the holy Crosse: for (say they) as the Master died on that, so his Disciples died vpon this.'⁷⁵

The home-grown nature of such relics apparently endowed them with extra miracle-working powers. At his execution in 1645, the Jesuit Henry Morse expressly wished a picture belonging to him to be sent to the Antwerp Carmelites: this picture – by then a relic – was laid on the breast of Margaret Mostyn during an illness that had the doctors mystified; 'taking a little of the holy martyr's blood, they gave it to her to take in a little wine' and she quickly recovered.⁷⁶ Experiencing a fallow period in entrants during her time as prioress of the Antwerp Carmelites, Frances Turner sought assistance from the relics of the five Jesuit martyrs of Charles II's reign. Not long after, in 1681, a new recruit arrived in the form of Mary Giffard. She was given the name of Mary of the Holy Martyrs in thanksgiving. Giffard's father had spent time in prison with those clergy martyred under Charles I and

⁷³ Camm, *Forgotten Shrines*, 371–2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 372.

⁷⁵ Mangion, 'Convents and the Outside World', 13.

⁷⁶ Hardman, *English Carmelites*, 113; Hallett, *Witchcraft*, 73–4, 111, 139; Hallett, *Lives of Spirit*, 183. Morse's relics were also being used in England during exorcisms: Francis Young, 'Catholic Exorcism in Early Modern England: Polemic, Propaganda and Folklore', *Recusant History*, 29 (2009): 499.

during the civil war: he made portraits of these martyrs, which were sent to the convent by Giffard's family.⁷⁷

Though these attitudes bound the women religious together in tighter-knit communities, the dynamics very much impacted upon the issue of identity: at their crudest, they were English martyr examples for English Catholics. In other words, it fostered an English Catholic identity that could easily be absent or fractured considering the diasporic nature of English Catholicism at the time. The creation process could, therefore, head down some more provocative paths, as underlined by the English convents' approach towards Jacobite 'martyrs'. Whilst this tied into the idea of the Royal Touch,⁷⁸ for exiled and disenfranchised Catholics the Jacobite 'martyrs' took on a more religious dimension, particularly at the Paris Augustinian convent. For example, when James II appeared close to death, the canonesses exposed the relics of St Justin and started a novena for the ailing Stuart's health.⁷⁹ Following the ousted king's death, they obtained a small piece of the deceased monarch's arm, which was exposed in the convent church for veneration.⁸⁰ On 14 March 1708, a novena of Masses was started at the convent in support of a new Jacobite enterprise at the expense of the Lady Derwentwater, 'who also gave wax tapers to be burnt

⁷⁷ Daemen-de Gelder, 'Life Writing II', 211. These portraits are now at Douai Abbey. English martyr names such as Campion were often adopted out of devotion: Chambers, *Life of Mary Ward*, 113, n. 7; WWTN, GP060, MW034, MW035. The Franciscans received a total of 29 'native' relics from a relation of the choir nun Ann Monington: Camm, *Forgotten Shrines*, 371.

⁷⁸ This was the alleged ability of English monarchs to cure scrofula by their touch: Walsham, 'Skeletons in the Cupboard', 130–1, 137–8.

⁷⁹ Cedoz, *Un Couvent*, chap. 6.

⁸⁰ Antony F. Allison, 'The English Augustinian Convent of Our Lady of Syon at Paris: Its Foundation and Struggle for Survival During the First Eighty Years, 1634–1713', *Recusant History*, 21 (1993): 484.

before ... the Relikes of Saint Justin.’⁸¹ This Catholicizing of the Jacobite cause went even further though: following the 1715 Jacobite rising, the embalmed heart of one of its executed leaders, James Radcliffe, third earl of Derwentwater, was sent first to the Pontoise Benedictines before reaching the Paris Augustinians to whom he had bequeathed it before his death.⁸² Those around the convent community viewed his heart as the relic of a martyr.⁸³ The prioress, Ann Tyldesley, wrote a letter to the earl’s widow on 23 December 1716 acknowledging receipt of the heart, commenting ‘I have some mortification that I cannot impart the joy to the rest of the family, who are richer than they know they are’. This was expanded upon in a further report written to the countess from the Jesuit George Brown in September 1718, when he revealed that the uncorrupted heart of the Earl was viewed as such a special relic that Tyldesley ‘keeps it in her cell, & so secretly, that she tells me there is not one besides me in the house that knows she has it.’⁸⁴ As Monta mentions in an earlier context, relics could become inscribed ‘with controversial purpose and political resistance.’⁸⁵

This is not just a case of relics and martyrs helping to create a sense of community and belonging: the view of Jacobite insurrectionists as martyrs takes the issue of identity further. Under the original Elizabethan anti-Catholic legislation, Catholicism had been

⁸¹ WDA, Paris Diurnal, 14 March 1708.

⁸² Francis J. A. Skeet, *The Life of the Right Honourable James Radcliffe Third Earl of Derwentwater* (London, 1929), 121.

⁸³ Stewart Foster, ‘Weep not around this bier’: *The Petre Family and the Earls of Derwentwater*, *The Dilston Papers*, 2 (2010), 9, 11.

⁸⁴ Essex Record Office, MSS D/DP/F273/20, D/DP/F273/30. For more on the relationship between the convents and the Jacobite movement, see Claire Walker, ‘“When God shall Restore them to their Kingdoms”: Nuns, Exiled Stuarts and English Catholic Identity, 1688–1745’, in Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith (eds), *Religion and Women in Britain, c. 1660–1760* (Farnham, 2014), 79–97.

⁸⁵ Susannah B. Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005), 69.

perceived in purely political terms, something to which the initial wave of missionary priests objected.⁸⁶ Yet here, ironically, English Catholics were seemingly adopting such a definition in their search for defining characteristics, something arguably driven by the politics of the Counter-Reformation⁸⁷ that saw a merging of the two supposedly separate strands. As such, the English convents were not just maintaining an English Catholic essence from pre-Reformation times; they were actively creating an identity for the time when Catholicism was returned to their homeland. All these strands are brought together in the Paris Augustinians' care of the ring of St Cuthbert. The community had been given the ring by their priestly founder, Bishop of Chalcedon Richard Smith. He had obtained the ring from his patron, Anthony, viscount Montague, who had in turn received it for safe-keeping from Sir Robert Hare after it had first been removed from the shrine in Durham Cathedral in 1537 by Thomas Watson, later bishop of Lincoln during Mary I's reign. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the ring never left the convent, where it was 'esteemed as genuine & precious by the community, & publicly venerated in their choir every year on the festival of the Saint'. On 6 August 1854, the canonesses finally let the relic from their sight following a letter from Nicholas Wiseman, leader of the recently re-established Catholic hierarchy of England and Wales. He had written to the community on several occasions, detailing how he was hunting down preserved 'English' relics. He said that all other relics of St Cuthbert were in Protestant hands and that the ring was the only one belonging to Catholics. With a seminary established in

⁸⁶ See Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, 'Puritans, Papists and the 'Public Sphere' in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context', *The Journal of Modern History*, 72 (2000): 587–627; Thomas S. Freeman, "'Imitatio Christi with a Vengeance': The Politicization of Martyrdom in Early Modern England', in Freeman and Mayer (eds), *Martyrs and Martyrdom*, 61–9. Such overt politicization was not wholly uncommon amongst Counter-Reformation Catholics: Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 275, 295–7.

⁸⁷ Dillon, *Construction of Martyrdom*, 370.

England's North-East, named in honour of the northern saint, the canonesses completed their task and sent the relic 'back home'.⁸⁸

In this example can be found the many different strands of the relationship between women religious and relics: persecution, continuity, spiritual heritage, relic rescue, identity preservation and the maintaining, even creating, of an English Catholic identity. Whilst English women religious behaved similarly to their Counter-Reformation counterparts across the continent, these issues of identity stand out. Though they may have been enclosed and based on the continent, the convents played a vital role not only in the maintaining and creating of an English Catholic material culture but in the very essence of forging an identity much needed to glue together an English Catholic community emerging from 200 years of scattered, disenfranchised existence.

⁸⁸ Ushaw College, UC/H256, 257, 258. Similarly, in 1792 Catharine Rouby, superior of the York Bar Convent, took possession of relics of Ss Ignatius, Francis Xavier and the True Cross from the English Jesuits in Watten, the Society having been suppressed. The Jesuits stipulated that they 'give these same Relicks to the district of York to be applied to the Church of the Chief College in Yorkshire when it shall please God to convert England': York Bar Convent, Box 4, K1–3. For the example of this mind-set in relation to the relics of Thomas Cantilupe, see Liesbeth Corens, 'Saints beyond Borders: Relics and the Expatriate English Catholic Community', in Jesse Spohnholz and Gary K. Waite (eds), *Exile and Religious Identity, 1500–1800* (London, 2014), 25–38.